



How the Normans Changed Britain After 1066

KS2 HISTORY

MEDIEVAL BRITAIN

Ages 10-14



4 min read

Who Were the Normans?

In **1066**, a man called **William the Conqueror** sailed from **Normandy** (in modern-day **France**) with an army and defeated the English King **Harold Godwinson** at the **Battle of Hastings**. This was a huge turning point for **Britain**. The **Normans** were warriors from the north of France who had their own language, customs, and way of running things. When they won, everything changed.

Think of it like when a new family moves into your neighbourhood and brings their own traditions, food, and way of doing things—except they were so powerful that everyone had to follow their way.

Language and Food

One of the biggest changes was the **English language** itself. The **Normans** spoke **French**, and they were in charge, so French words started mixing into English. That's why we still use French words today—words like "**pork**" (from the French word **porc**) and "**beef**" (from **boeuf**). Sheep stayed "sheep" because English farmers looked after them, but when Norman nobles ate the meat, it became "mutton." Rich Norman words replaced simple English words for meat because the Normans were eating it!

Think of it like when you get a new gaming console from another country—its words for buttons and menus slowly become part of how everyone talks about games.

Castles and Building

The **Normans** loved building strong **stone castles** to show their power and control. Before **1066**, England didn't have many big stone castles. The **Normans** built hundreds of them—places like **the Tower of London**, which **William** started in **1066**. These castles weren't just homes; they were military strongholds and symbols that the Normans were in charge.

Government and Society

The **Normans** brought a system called **feudalism**, where land and power were carefully organised. **William** owned all the land and gave pieces of it to Norman nobles in exchange for military support. This completely changed how **English** society worked. The old English nobility lost their power, and **Norman** nobles took over. By the time of **William's** death in **1087**, the **Normans** controlled everything—the government, the Church, and the land itself.

A Lasting Legacy

Over time, the **Normans** and **English** people mixed together, creating a new **Anglo-Norman** culture. But the changes they made lasted for centuries. Our language, our castles, our government system—they all show the **Norman** influence. The conquest of **1066** wasn't just a battle; it was the moment Britain became something entirely new.